

## PLA Army 95<sup>th</sup> Anniversary Event – Friday 29 July

### Chief of Army Remarks

Tena koutou katou

Ge wei laibin *{distinguished guests}*

Da jia wanshang hao *{good evening to all}*

Your Excellency Ambassador Wang, distinguished guests, ladies and gentlemen – good evening.

First, I would like to thank Senior Colonel Ke and the defence staff at the Chinese Embassy for inviting me to speak tonight on behalf of the New Zealand Defence Force and the Ministry of Defence.

I'm very pleased to be with you all this evening at Te Papa Tongarewa to recognise the 95th Anniversary of the founding of the People's Liberation Army.

Minister Henare regrettably couldn't be with us this evening, however, in the spirit of cooperation I note the recent, and first in-person meeting between Minister Henare and Minister Wei Fenghe in the margins of the Shangri La Dialogue in Singapore.

In April last year, the New Zealand Army also celebrated a significant milestone, its 175<sup>th</sup> anniversary. Like the important milestone we mark today, it was an opportunity to reflect on the service and sacrifice of our service men and women.

Since its inception in 1927, the PLA has undergone a rapid transformation of scale and modernisation. The PLA brings formidable resources to global security challenges. Today, the New Zealand Defence Force operates alongside the PLA through contributions to global peace support operations. This includes our respective contributions to the United Nations Mission in South

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Sudan (UNMISS), which plays a central role in international efforts to address the security and humanitarian crisis in South Sudan. Our personnel are also deployed to the UN's oldest peacekeeping mission, the United Nations Truce Supervision Organisation (UNTSO), established to supervise implementation of the Israel-Arab Armistice Agreements.

The China – New Zealand defence relationship is underpinned by formal dialogues, senior exchanges, cooperation in international activities and multilateral cooperation.

Our defence relationship is based on openness and respect. We appreciate opportunities to meet with China, and build on our people-to-people links.

Importantly, these engagements provide a mechanism to gain a greater understanding of each other's perspective, which is especially valuable when those perspectives differ.

This year also marks the **50<sup>th</sup> anniversary of diplomatic relations** between our two countries. This is an important milestone for our relationship – just as China is an important partner for New Zealand.

Since diplomatic relations were established in 1972, the bilateral relationship between New Zealand and China has grown to become one of significance.

Maintaining people-to-people links, and promoting understanding, between our two countries remains as important as ever, particularly as we navigate an increasingly unstable and uncertain world.

I want to take this opportunity to say a special thank you to Senior Colonel Ke and his team for all your support for the defence relationship.

Senior Colonel Ke, I understand you are nearing the end of your posting to Wellington. I hope you enjoyed your time here in New

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Zealand and enjoyed the cultural and natural beauty of our home. I wish you all the best for your journey home and your next role.

To close, ladies and gentlemen, I ask you to raise your glasses to the 95<sup>th</sup> anniversary of the PLA, to the China – New Zealand defence relationship, and to our gracious hosts.

Thank you.